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POSITION

OF THE

SOUTHERN CHURCH

IN RELATION TO

SLAVERY,

AS ILLUSTRATED IN A

LETTER OF DR. F. A. ROSS TO REV. ALBERT BARNES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

A CONSTITUTIONAL PRESBYTERIAN.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE recent excellent work by the Rev. Albert Barnes, entitled "The Church and Slavery," has called forth a series of letters from the Rev. F. A. Ross, D.D., of Alabama. They were originally published in the Philadelphia *Christian Observer*. As the circulation of that paper is not large in the North, it has been thought desirable that public attention should be called to them through some other channel. The author is one of the most eminent of the Southern divines. He may be fitly styled a "representative man." He is not only able, but frank, fearless, and outspoken. Where others would be silent, or discourse with reserve, as of things we are not yet "able to bear," he boldly utters in our ears, "tingle" though they may, the whole matter. It is good to listen to such a man. You learn where others are, and where you yourself are, or at least, where you should be. It is especially felicitous that Dr. Ross has spoken at the present time. The true position of the South, as touching the great, growing, overshadowing system of American Slavery—the deadly nightshade on the fair soil of freedom—is, in some quarters, held in doubt. The South, and especially the Southern Church, it has been said, are misrepresented. They dislike slavery as truly as we. They would gladly be rid of it. Their only difficulty respects the means of such a consummation. How erroneous is this view, as matters now stand, various recent events have been clearly showing. And nothing more clearly than the letter of Dr. Ross. The tract of our good "angel of the Church in Philadelphia," has been

as the spear of Ithuriel, to existing Southern opinion. It has started up in full, unmistakable proportions. Dr. Ross' Letters have been republished in the *Presbyterian Witness*, at Knoxville, Tenn., and have received from various parts of the South, high commendation. Dr. Cleland of Kentucky, for example, writes thus to the *Christian Observer:*

"I have just read Dr. Ross's third Letter, which, with what he will say in his next, will be so full and complete, as respects the scriptural view of slavery, as entirely to supersede my feeble article I sent you some time ago, and which you wisely laid aside for the present. Dr. R. covers the whole ground, scripturally, argumentatively, luminously, and powerfully. I have scarcely ever met with a writer, ancient or modern, who, in regard to style, proof, and argument, excels, or even equals Dr. Ross. I would have a curiosity to see from the other side, what can be said in reply. When I wrote my paper, 'Let there be light,' I did not know it was coming so soon, or I would not have troubled you, or myself, with my poor dim taper, except so far as it gives scriptural light, which I thought had been wanting long ago. But Ross's Letters will answer every purpose, and I hope they will be published in book form, for preservation and general use."

The *Observer* has other letters "of like character." It seems delighted itself with Dr. Ross's views. His letters, it says, "have been read with approval by thousands, comprising ministers, statesmen, the President of the United States, members of the bar, and elders of the Church—men of the profoundest minds; and his argument can not be set aside by the terrors of 'seven-fold condemnation.'" *No divine of eminence, it is believed, in the Southern part of the Constitutional Presbyterian Church, will pronounce the views of Dr. Ross unsound.*

Such being the state of things, it is desirable that the whole Church should know it. To this end, Dr. Ross's first Letter is here republished. That is given, because

it clearly exhibits his position. It would have been gratifying to include the whole, but that would have unduly enlarged the present pamphlet. The entire series will probably be given to the public in some permanent form, and it may be safely commended, beforehand, to all clear thinkers. It will be found very readable, and not without some notable curiosities. As, for example, a reproduction of the old exploded theory, that there is "no such thing" as "an ultimate eternal distinction, in the nature of things, between right and wrong"—that they are the result purely of a divine arbitrament—"that a thing is right, not because it is ever so *per se*, but because God *makes it right*." For aught that appears, the Doctor would say with that old English schoolman, William of Ockham: "If God had commanded his creatures to hate himself, the hatred of God would ever be the duty of man." Some of the Southern thinkers hesitate a little about this particular view. Their organs of deglutition are not quite adequate to it. They even venture, as appears from a late *Presbyterian Witness*, to quote the great Edwards to the contrary. It is not improbable, however, that the arbitrament theory will at length be swallowed. It is so convenient a thing to the pro-slavery side, to get rid of "eternal distinctions," and make right and wrong of as plastic a nature as possible.

In looking over the following letter, several things will strike every reader. First, its confirmation of all that has been said respecting a great Southern apostasy on the subject of slavery. Let its views and reasonings be compared with the noble testimony of 1818, illustrated and confirmed by various subsequent action, down to that of the last Assembly. Dr. Ross even glories in the progress that has been made, and treats with undisguised contempt all the past utterances of the Church. "*It was a mistaken*

public sentiment," he says—that of other days. "The Southern slaveholder is now satisfied as never before." The principles of the Declaration of Independence he regards not, with Mr. Choate, as "glittering generalities," but as opaque absurdities. He repudiates them. He declares them accursed of God. He puts "the relation of master and slave in the same category as that of husband and wife, parent and child." It is as truly sanctioned, he insists, by the Bible. He makes no apology for slavery, but boldly defends it as "ordained of God."

The abounding sophistries of the argument will, to a discerning eye, be quite apparent. As, for example, the treatment of *first truths*, those great vitalities of all science, human or divine—those fundamental elements, especially of all reasoning about the *internal evidence* of Revelation. So, also, the confounding of slavery, a *property* institution, an affair of "chattels," with the *governmental* economy. But we need not enlarge on this point. The present design is *information*, rather than argument.

The important question will suggest itself, what is now the duty of our Church? What should be done by the coming General Assembly? A great effort is being made to keep it quite silent. Nay, to bring about, indirectly, what would be virtually a retrograde, pro-slavery course. Witness the clamor, on the flimsiest of grounds, against the recent mild, conservative, righteous action of the Home Missionary Society—action perfectly harmonious in its spirit with that of so many of our General Assemblies. With all humility and deference—not in the way of dictation, but as the known views of many in our Church—the few following suggestions are offered:

1. Let no unconstitutional course be taken. The most scrupulous care should be exercised in that regard. They who plead for righteousness, must not invade rights. Let us stand in this respect just where we have always stood.

2. As to *discipline*, there is, doubtless, a possibility of it; as the "Majority Report" of last year showed. Whether in the way of *reference*, or *appeal*, or *complaint*, or of *general review and control*, the way will be open for it, the wisdom of the Assembly will determine. In this relation, Chapter VII., Sec. I., of our Book of Discipline deserves to be carefully studied.

3. All surely will say, let there be no more "Delphic words." *Let there be no action that can be misconstrued.* The reader will see how Dr. Ross interprets the unprecedented insertion of the rejected "Minority Report" in last year's Minutes. An interpretation quite accordant, it will be remembered, with the prediction then made. Let no such mistake be repeated.

4. Does not the manifest change in Southern sentiment —the great apostasy so plainly indicated—call, at least, for some new and appropriate *testimony?* Something that Dr. Ross can hardly term a "stultified abstraction." It is not to be credited, indeed, that the apostasy is universal. We believe better things of the South. But it is so general, so rampant, so overbearing, *so boldly aggressive*, that it ought to be promptly met, not in wrath, but decidedly, calmly, and firmly. The following action of the Synod of CINCINNATI, touching this point, is worthy the most serious consideration:

"Since erroneous impressions exist in some minds in respect to the true position of the Presbyterian Church, whereby its efficiency and usefulness threaten to be impaired, and since an open apostasy from the common faith of the Christian Church on the subject of slavery, is now avowed by many at the South, we feel that the Assembly is called to make a new, solemn, and emphatic DECLARATION AND TESTIMONY adapted to this new state of things.

"In particular, it is openly maintained by professed followers

of Christ, that slavery as a system is right, and to be defended '*as it is*;' that it involves no necessary wrongs, and may be properly supported, defended, and participated in, by Christian men; and this too, at a time when the most determined efforts are making to extend its blight over vast regions now free! We do, therefore, earnestly petition the Assembly to adopt the following declaration and testimony, or one equivalent to it, to wit:

"WHEREAS, The system of Slavery existing in these United States is essentially at variance with the principles and spirit of the Gospel of Christ; and

"WHEREAS, Strenuous efforts are now making to extend and perpetuate it, notwithstanding the oppression, immorality, and cruelty, and the numerous evils, spiritual and temporal, which it involves,

"*Resolved*, That this body feel constrained to renew their SOLEMN TESTIMONY against this great iniquity, and do earnestly exhort and entreat all Christian men with whom they can have any influence, not only to participate in it, but to labor to array against it the *conscience and the whole moral power of the Christian Church.*"

In the present state of things, our Assembly can hardly say less than this. Some of our Synods have expressed a desire for still more emphatic and effective action. The Synods of INDIANA, WABASH, and WESTERN RESERVE call for discipline. May the Assembly receive from on high, "not the spirit of fear, but of love, and of power, and of a sound mind." May it so treat this important subject, that it shall "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." So shall we have the smile of Him who hath guided and helped us as a Church hitherto, and who, if we are but true to Him and to righteousness, will never leave nor forsake us.

A CONSTITUTIONAL PRESBYTERIAN.

LETTER OF DR. ROSS.

REV. A. BARNES:

DEAR SIR: You have recently published a tract—"The Church and Slavery."

"The opinion of each individual," you remark, "contributes to form public sentiment, as the labor of the animalcule in the ocean, contributes to the coral reefs that rise above the waves."

True, sir, and beautifully expressed. But while in harmony with your intimation, I must regard you one of the animalcules rearing the coral reef of public opinion, I can not admit your disclaimer of "special influence" among them in their work. Doubtless, sir, you have "special influence"—and deserve to have. I make no apology for addressing you. I am one of the animalcules,

I agree and I disagree with you. I harmonize in your words—"The present is, eminently, a time, when the views of every man on the subject of slavery should be uttered in unambiguous tones." I agree with you in this affirmation; because the subject has yet to be fully understood: Because, when understood, if THE BIBLE does *not* sanction the system, the MASTER must cease to be the master. The SLAVE must cease to be the slave. He must be *free*, AND EQUAL IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE. *That* is your "*unambiguous tone*." Let it be heard, if *that* is the word of God.

But if THE BIBLE *does* sanction the system, then *that* "unambiguous tone" will silence abolitionists,

who admit the Scriptures—it will satisfy all good men, and give peace to the country. That is the "*tone*" I want men to hear. Listen to it in the past and present speech of providence. The time was when *you* had the very *public sentiment* you are now trying to form. From Maine to Louisiana, the American mind was softly yielding to the impress of emancipation, in some hope, however vague and imaginary. Southern, as well as Northern men, in the Church and out of it, not having sufficiently studied the word of God, and under our own and French revolutionary excitement, looking only at the evils of slavery, wished it away from the land. *It was a mistaken public sentiment.* Yet, such as it was, you had it, and it was doing your work. It was Quaker-like, mild and affectionate. It did not, however, work fast enough for you. You thought that the negro, with his superior attributes of body and mind, and higher advantages of the nineteenth century, might reach, in a day, the liberty and equality which the Anglo-American had attained after the struggle of his ancestors during a thousand years! You got up the agitation. You got it up in the Church and State. You got it up over the length and breadth of this whole land. Let me show you some things you have secured, as the results of your work.

FIRST RESULT OF AGITATION.

1. The most consistent abolitionists, affirming the sin of slavery, on the maxim of created equality and unalienable right, after torturing the Bible, for a while, to make it give the same testimony, felt they could get nothing from the book. They felt that the God of the Bible disregarded the thumb-screw, the boot, and the wheel; that He would not speak

for them, but against them. These consistent men have now turned away from the word, in despondency; and are seeking, somewhere, an abolition Bible, an abolition Constitution for the United States, and an abolition God.

This sir, is the *first result* of your agitation. The very van of your attack repulsed, and driven into infidelity.

A SECOND RESULT OF AGITATION.

2. Many others, and you among them, are trying in exactly the same way, just mentioned, to make the Bible speak against slaveholding. You get nothing by torturing the English version. People understand English. Nay, you get little by applying the rack to the Hebrew and Greek; even before a tribunal of men, like you, who proclaim beforehand, that Moses, in Hebrew, and Paul, in Greek, *must* condemn slavery, because—"*it is a violation of the first sentiments of the Declaration of Independence.*" You find it difficult to persuade men that Moses and Paul were moved by the Holy Ghost, to sanction the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson! You find it hard to make men believe that Moses saw in the mount, and Paul had vision in heaven, that this future *apostle of Liberty* was inspired by Jesus Christ.

You torture very severely. But the muscles and bones of those old men are tough, and strong. They won't yield under your terrible wrenchings. You get only groans and mutterings. You claim these voices, I know, as testimony against slavery. But you can not torture in secret, as in olden times. When putting the question, you have to let men be present—who tell us, that Moses and Paul won't speak for you—that they are silent, like Christ be-

fore Pilate's scourging men; or, in groans and mutterings—the voices of their sorrow, and the tones of their indignation—they rebuke your pre-judgment of the Almighty, when you say—if the Bible sanctions slavery—"it neither ought to be, nor could be received by mankind as a divine revelation."

This, sir, is the *second result* you have gained by your agitation. You have brought a thousand Northern ministers of the Gospel, with yourself, to the verge of the same denial of the word of God, which they have made who are only a little ahead of you, in the road you are travelling.

A THIRD RESULT OF AGITATION.

3. Meanwhile, many of your most pious men, soundest scholars, and sagacious observers of providence, have been led to study the Bible more faithfully in the light of the times. And they are reading it, more and more, in harmony with the views which have been reached by the highest Southern minds, to wit: That the relation of master and slave is sanctioned by the Bible; that it is a relation belonging to the same category as those of husband and wife, parent and child, master and apprentice, master and hireling; that the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, *were ordained in Eden, for man, as man*, and *modified after the fall;* while the relation of slavery, as a system of labor, is *only one form of the government ordained of God, over fallen and degraded man;* that the *evils* in the system are *the same evils* of OPPRESSION we see in the relation of husband and wife, and all other forms of government; that slavery, as a relation, suited to the more degraded, or the more ignorant and helpless types of a sunken humanity, is, like all government, intended *as the proof of the curse of such de-*

gradation, and at the same time to elevate and bless ; that the relation of husband and wife, being for man, as man, *will ever be over him ;* while slavery will remain so long as God sees it best, as a controlling power over the ignorant, the more degraded and helpless ; and that, when He sees it for the good of the country, he will cause it to pass away, if the slave can be elevated to liberty and equality, political and social, with his master, *in* that country ; or *out of* that country, if such elevation can not be given therein, but may be realized in some other land ; all which result, must be left to the unfoldings of the Divine will, *in harmony with the Bible*, and not to a newly-discovered dispensation. These facts are vindicated in the Bible and Providence. In the Old Testament they stare you in the face ; in the family of Abraham ; in his slaves, bought with his money, and born in his house ; in Hagar, running away, under her mistress's hard dealing with her, and yet sent back, as a fugitive slave, by the angel ; in the law, which authorized the Hebrews to hold their brethren as slaves, for a time ; in which parents might sell their children into bondage ; in which the heathen were given to the Hebrews as their slaves forever ; in which slaves were considered so much the money of their master, that the master who killed one by an unguarded blow, was, under certain circumstances, sufficiently punished in his slave's death, because he thereby lost his money ; in which the difference between *man-stealing* and *slaveholding* is, by law, set forth ; in which the runaway from heathen masters may not be restored, because God gave him the benefits of an adopted Hebrew. In the New Testament, wherein the slavery of Greece and Rome was recognized ; in the obligations laid on master and slave ; in the close connection of this obligation with the duties of husband and wife, parent and child : in the obligation to return the

fugitive slave to his master; and *in the condemnation of every abolition principle*, "AS DESTITUTE OF THE TRUTH." (1 Tim. 6 : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.)

This view of slavery is becoming more and more, not only the settled decision of the Southern, but of the best Northern mind, with a movement so strong, that you have been startled by it, to write the pamphlet now lying before me.

This is the *third result* you have secured, to make many of the best men in the North see the infidelity of your philosophy, falsely so-called, on the subject of slavery, in the clearer and clearer light of the Scriptures.

ANOTHER RESULT OF AGITATION.

4. The Southern slaveholder is now satisfied, as never before, that the relation of master and slave is sanctioned by the Bible; and he feels, as never before, the obligations of the word of God. He, no longer, in his ignorance of the Scripture, and afraid of its teachings, will seek to defend his common-sense opinions of slavery by arguments drawn from "Types of Mankind," and other infidel theories; but he will look, in the light of the Bible, on all the good and evil in the system. And when the North, as it will, shall regard him holding from God this high power for great good—when the North shall no more curse, but bid him God speed—then he will bless himself and his slave, in nobler benevolence. With no false ideas of created equality and unalienable right, but with the Bible in his heart and hand, he will do justice and love mercy, in higher and higher rule. Every evil will be removed, and the negro will be elevated to the highest attainments he can make, and be prepared for whatever destiny God intends. This, sir, is the *fourth result* of your agitation—to make the Southern master *know*, from

the Bible, his right to be a master, and his duty to his slave.

These *four results* are so fully before you, that I think you must see and feel them. You have brought out, besides, tremendous political consequences, giving astonishing growth and spread to the slave power—on these I can not dwell. Sir, are you satisfied with these consequences of the agitation you have gotten up? I am. I thank God that the great deep of the American mind has been blown upon by the wind of abolitionism. I rejoice that the stagnant water of that American mind has been so greatly purified. I rejoice that the infidelity and the semi-infidelity, so long latent, have been set free. I rejoice that the sober sense, North and South, so strangely asleep and silent, has risen up to hear the word of God, and to speak it to the land. I rejoice that all the South now know that God gives right to hold slaves, and with that right, obligations they must fulfill. I rejoice that the day has dawned, in which the North and South will think, and feel, and act together on the subject of slavery. I thank God for the agitation. May he forgive the folly and wickedness of many who have gotten it up. May he reveal more and more, that surely the wrath of man shall praise him, while the remainder of wrath he will restrain.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

I agree with you, sir, that *the second paragraph* of the Declaration of Independence contains *five affirmations*, declared to be self-evident truths, which, if truths, do sustain you, and all abolitionists, in every thing you say, as to the right of the negro to liberty —and not only to liberty—to equality, political and social. But I disagree with you as to their truth.

And I say that not one of said affirmations is a self-evident truth, or a truth at all. On the contrary, that each one is contrary to the Bible; that each one separately is denied; and that all five, collectively, are denied and upset by the Bible, by the natural history of man, and by Providence, in every age of the world. I say this now. In a subsequent communication I will prove what I affirm. For the present I merely add, that the Declaration of Independence stands in no need of these false affirmations. It was, and is, a beautiful whole without them. It was, and is, without these imaginary maxims, the simple statement of the grievances the colonies had borne from the mother country, and their right, *as colonies*, when thus oppressed, to declare themselves independent. That is to say, the right given of God to oppressed children to seek protection in another family, or to set up for themselves, somewhat before *twenty-one*, or natural maturity; right belonging to them *in the British family;* right sanctioned of God; right blessed of God, in the resistance of the colonies, *as colonies*, not as individual men, to the attempt of the mother country to consummate her tyranny. But God gives no sanction to the affirmation that he has *created all men equal*—that this is *self-evident*—and that he has given them *unalienable rights*—that he has made government to *derive its power solely from their consent*—and that he has given them *the right to change that government, in their mere pleasure.* All this—every word of it—every jot and tittle, is the liberty and equality claimed by infidelity. God has cursed it seven times in France since 1793; and he will curse it there seventy times seven, if Frenchmen prefer to be pestled so often in Solomon's mortar. He has cursed it in Prussia, Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain. He will curse it as long as time, whether it is affirmed by Jefferson, Paine, Robes-

pierre, Ledru Rollin, Kossuth, Greeley, Garrison, or Barnes.

Sir, that paragraph is an *excrescence* on the tree of our liberty. I pray you take it away. Worship it if you will, and in manner imitate the Druid. He gave reverence to the *mistletoe*, but first he removed the *parasite* from the noble tree. Do you the same. Cut away *this mistletoe*, with golden knife, as did the Druid—enshrine its imaginary divinity in grove or cave—then retire there, and leave our oak to stand in its glory, in the light of heaven. Men have been afraid to say all this for years, just as they have been timid to assert that God has placed master and slave in the same relation as husband and wife. Public sentiment, which you once had and have lost, suppressed this utterance, as the other. But now, men speak out; and I, for one, will tell you what the Bible reveals as to that part of the Declaration of Independence, as fearlessly as I tell you what it says of the system of slavery.

HOW MEN ARE MADE INFIDELS.

I agree with you that some men have been, are, and will be made infidels by hearing that God has ordained slavery as one form of his government over depraved mankind. But how does this fact prove that the Bible does not sanction slavery? Why, sir, you have been all your life teaching that some men are made infidels by hearing any truth of the Bible! —that some men are made infidels by hearing the Trinity — Depravity — Atonement — Divinity of Christ—Resurrection—Eternal punishment. True; and these men find "*great laws of their nature—instinctive feelings*"—just such as you find against slavery, and not more perverted in them than in you, condemning all this Bible. And they hold

now, with your sanction, that a book affirming such facts "*can not be from God.*"

Sir, some men are made infidels by hearing the ten commandments, and they find "*great laws of their nature,*" as strong in them as yours in you against slavery, warring against every one of these commandments. And they declare now, with your authority, that a book imposing such restraints upon human nature, "*can not be from God.*" Sir, what is it makes infidels? You have been wont to answer—"They *will not* have God *to rule over them.* They *will not* have the BIBLE *to control the great laws of their nature.*" Sir, that is the true answer. And you know that *the great instinct of liberty* is only one of *three great laws*, needing special teaching and government—that is to say, *the instinct to rule; the instinct to submit to be ruled; and the instinct for liberty.* You know, too, that the instinct *to submit* is the strongest; the instinct *to rule* is next, and that the *aspiration for liberty* is the weakest. Hence you know the overwhelming majority of men have ever been willing to be slaves; masters have been next in number, while the few have struggled for freedom.

The Bible, then, in proclaiming God's will *as to these three great impulses*, will be rejected by men, exactly as they have yielded forbidden control to the one or the other of them. The Bible will make infidels of *masters*, when God calls to them to rule right, or to give up rule, if they have allowed *the instinct of power* to make them hate God's authority. Pharaoh spoke for all infidel rulers when he said: "*Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?*"

The Bible will make infidels of *slaves*, when God calls to them to aspire to be free, if they have permitted *the instinct of submission* to make them hate his commands. The Israelites, in the wilderness, revealed ten times, in their murmuring, *the slave in-*

stinct in all ages. "*Would to God we had died in the wilderness.*" You know all this, and you condemn these infidels. Good.

But, sir, you know, equally well, that the Bible will make infidels of men *affirming the instinct of liberty*, when God calls them to learn of him, how *much liberty* he gives, and *how* he gives it, and *when* he gives it—if they have so yielded to this law of their nature, as to make them despise the word of the Lord. Sir, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, spoke out just what the liberty and equality men have said in all time. "*Ye, Moses, and Aaron, take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them—wherefore, then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation?*" Verily, sir, these men were intensely excited by "*the great law of our nature—the great instinct of freedom.*" Yea, that, they told God, to his face, they had looked within, and found the *higher law of liberty, and equality—the eternal right, in their intuitional consciousness.* And that they would not submit to his will, in the elevation of Moses, and Aaron, *above them.*

Verily, sir, you, in the spirit of Korah, now proclaim, and say: "Ye masters, and ye white men, who are masters, North and South, ye take too much upon you, seeing the negro is created your equal, and by unalienable right, is as free as you, and entitled to all your political and social life. Ye take then too much upon you in excluding him from your positions, of wealth, and honor—from your halls of legislation, and from your palace of the nation—and from your splendid couch—and from your fair woman with long hair, on that couch, and in that gilded chariot—wherefore, then, lift ye up yourselves above the negro?"

Verily, sir, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, said all we have ever heard from abolition platforms, or

now listen to from you. But the Lord made the earth swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!

I agree with you, then, sir, fully, that some men have been, are, and will be made infidels by hearing that God, in the Bible, has ordained slavery. But I hold this to be no argument against the fact, that the Bible does so teach, because, men are made infidels by any other doctrine or precept they hate to believe.

Sir, no man has said all this better than you. And I can not express my grief, that you, in the principle now avowed, *that every man must interpret the Bible, as he chooses to reason and feel*—you sanction all the infidelity in the world, obliterate your "*Notes*" on the Bible, and deny the preaching of your whole life—so far, as God may, in his wrath, permit you, to expunge, or recall, the words of the wisdom of your better day.

TESTIMONIES OF GENERAL ASSEMBLIES.

I agree with you, that the Presbyterian Church, both before and since its division, has testified, after a fashion, against slavery. But some of its action has been very curious testimony. I know not how the anti-slavery resolutions of 1818 were gotten up; nor how in some Assemblies since. I can guess, however, from what I do know, as to how such resolutions passed in Buffalo in 1853, and in New-York in 1856. I know that in Buffalo they were at first voted down by a large majority. Then, they were reconsidered, in mere courtesy to men, who said they wanted to speak. So the resolutions were passed, after some days, in which the *screws* were applied, and turned, in part, *by female hands*, to save the chairman of the committee from *the effects* of the resolutions being finally voted down!

I know that in New-York, the decision of the

Assembly, to spread the minority report on the Minutes, was considered, in the body and out of it, as a Southern victory. For it revealed, however glossed over, that many in the house who could not vote, directly, for the minority report, did, in fact, prefer it to the other.

I was not in Detroit in 1850. But I think it was established in New-York, last May, that, that Detroit testimony was so admirably worded, that both Southern and Northern men might vote for it with clear consciences!

I need not pursue the investigation. I admit, that after this sort, you have the stultified abstractions of the N. S. Presbyterian Church, while I have its common-sense. You have its Delphic words. I have its actions. You have the traditions of the elders, making void the word of God. I have the providence of God restraining the Church from destroying itself, and our social organization, under folly, fanaticism, and infidelity.

You, sir, seem to acknowledge this. For, while you appear pleased with the testimony of the N. S. Presbyterian Church, such as it is, you lament, that the Old School have not been true to the resolutions of '18—that in that branch of the Church, it is questionable whether those resolutions could now be adopted. You lament the silence of the Episcopal, the Southern Methodist, and the Baptist denominations—you might add the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. And you know that in New-England, in New-York, and in the North-West, many testify against *us* as a pro-slavery body. You lament, that so many members of the Church, ministers of the Gospel, and editors of religious papers, defend the system. You lament, that so large a part of the religious literature of the land, though having its seat North, and sustained chiefly by Northern funds, shows a perpetual deference to the slaveholder.

You lament, that after fifty years nothing has been done to arrest slavery. You lament, and ask—"Why should this be so?" In saying this, you acknowledge, that while you have been laboring to get, and have reached the abstract testimony of the Church, all diluted as it is, the common-sense fact has been, and is, more and more, brought out, in the providence of God, that *the slave power has been, and is gaining ground in the United States.* In one word, you have contrived to get, in confused utterance, the voice of the Sanhedrim, while Christ, himself, has been preaching in the streets of our Jerusalem, the true meaning of slavery, as one form of his government over fallen men.

These then are some of the things I promised to show, as the results of your agitation. This is the "*tone*" of the past and present speech of providence on the subject of slavery. You seem disturbed. I feel sure things are going on well, as to that subject. Speak on, then, "in unambiguous tones." But, sir, when you desire to go from words to actions, when you intimate, that the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church may be altered to permit such action —or, that, without its alteration, the Church can detach itself from slavery by its existing laws, or the modification of them—then, I understand you to mean, that you desire to deal, in fact, with slaveholders as *offenders.* Then, sir, *you mean to excind the South.* For, it is absurd to imagine, that you suppose the South will submit to such action. You mean then *to excind the South—or to excind yourself, and others*—or to *compel the South to withdraw.* Your tract just published, is, I suppose, intended by you, to prepare the next General Assembly for such movement?—What then? Will you make your "American Presbyterian," and your Presbyterian House effect that great change in the religious literature of the land, whereby the subject

of slaveholding shall be approached, *precisely*, as you deal with theft, highway robbers, or piracy?" Will you, then, by act of Assembly, Synod, Presbytery, Session, deny your pulpits, and communion bread and wine, to slaveholding ministers, elders, and members? Will you then tell New-England, and especially little Rhoda—we have purified our skirts from the blood—forgive us, and take us again to your love? What then? Will you then, ostracise the South, and compel the abolition of slavery? Sir, do you bid us fear these coming events, thus casting their shadow before, from the leaves of your book?

Sir, you may destroy the integrity of the New-School Presbyterian Church. So much evil you may do, that you will hereby only add immensely to the great power and good of the Old School. And you will make disclosures of providence, unravelling a consummation of things very different from the end you wish to accomplish for your country and the world. I write, as one of the animalcules contributing to the coral reef of public opinion.

F. A. Ross.